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EXHIBIT 7
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HB 294

YAHOO! MAIL

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Subject: Veterans scholarship

Date: Mon, 19 Feb 2007 07:43:41 -0700

From: "Thomas Figarelle" <thomas.figarelle@msugf.edu>

To: suedickenson@yahoo.com

Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Tom Figarelle. I am a resident of Great Falls. Am a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army National Guard and the Development Officer at Montana State University - Great Falls. While I am not here officially representing either of these organizations through this testimony, I believe I have a unique perspective concerning this bill.

As an officer in the Guard I interact with a number of young soldiers in my platoon, who inspite of the great education benefits offered, do not view college as a reality. Often these soldiers come from low income families where college was never an option for them or was never stressed as a worthwhile endeavor. So while current Guard tuition assistant packages are great for some, those who do not even consider themselves as the "college type" do not see the benefits.

At the same time, I have served with many Non-commissioned officers who after years in the Guard and after long deployments, have decided to leave the service of their state to fully ^{pursue} their educational goals. Often times these individuals were once the young soldiers I mentioned above who while in the service of the country, they did not see the benefits of education in their own lives. Now older, and perhaps more focused on their individual goals, these veterans do not have many options for financial assistance at thier disposal. Thus making it difficult to ^{pursue} higher education.

In my civilian career as the Development Officer at MSU-Great Fallsn I work on the creation and establishment of private scholarships and endowments. As such, I have first hand seen the success that many students have through opportunities provided by scholarships. Yet when we are working with the dozens and dozens of sholarship awards offered at our campus, we have notice no offerings specifically for veterans. This unfortunate void can stop now.

Through passage of this bill, the state of Montana can provide real leadership in showing the appreciation for our veterans. Moreover, as a state we can open a door of education opportunity for those who are worthy and in need of some financial assistance.

Thank you for your time and please vote yes on this great bill.

Tom fiagrelle, Great Falls

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